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April 27, 2009

***SENATOR CARDIN APPLAUDS SECRETARY SALAZAR'S  
DETERMINATION TO REVERSE BUSH  
ADMINISTRATION'S RULING THAT REMOVED STREAM  
PROTECTION FROM MOUNTAINTOP COAL MINING***

WASHINGTON – **U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin** (D-MD), today applauded Secretary of Interior Ken Salazar's announcement that he will reverse a Bush Administration rule allowing coal mine operators to dump mountaintop fill within 100 feet of a stream. The rule, issued by the Office of Surface Mining, was linked to a separate Bush Administration rule that allowed the waste to be dumped directly into streams. In March, Senator Cardin joined with Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN) to introduce the ***Appalachia Restoration Act*** to amend the Clean Water Act to prevent the dumping of mountaintop fill into streams and rivers.

*"Today's action by the Obama Administration represents a victory for common sense, a victory for science, and a victory for the people who live near mountaintop mines," said Senator Cardin, chairman of the Water and Wildlife Subcommittee of the Environment and Public Works Committee. "The Bush Administration's so-called 'buffer rule' allowing this kind of destructive dumping was pushed through in the closing days of the Administration and was clearly intended to reverse long-standing policy that protected communities and habitat from this kind of damage. I applaud the action of Secretary Salazar, but we also must be mindful that we need to work to update the Clean Water Act so that we can finally end these practices that are harmful to our streams and rivers."*

Mountaintop mining is a method of coal mining in which the summit of a mountain is removed to expose the coal beneath, and the resulting millions of tons of waste rock, dirt and vegetation are dumped into nearby stream and river valleys. More than 1 million acres of Appalachia have already been affected. An estimated 1,200 miles of headwater streams have been buried under tons of mining wastes. More than 500 mountains have been impacted, and homes have been ruined and drinking water supplies contaminated.

In 1983, the Reagan Administration issued what has become known as the "stream buffer zone rule," providing greater protection for communities and habitat by allowing the dumping of overburden material within 100 feet of perennial or intermittent stream only

if it has been found that such activities would not be harmful to water quality or quality of other environmental resources of the stream. The Bush Administration's action reversed the 1983 policy creating a stream zone buffer.

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